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SUBJECT: TRADE ONE-WAY ON IRAQ/IRAN BORDER AT ZURBATIYAH

Classified By: DCM Patricia A. Butenis for Reasons 1.4 a,b,d,e,g.

¶1. (C/REL MCFI) Summary: Trade is one way on the Iran-Iraq border crossing at Zurbatiyah as Iraqi cargo trucks arrive empty and collect cargo from Iran. Turnaround for cargo takes about half a day. U.S. military visual inspection for incoming cargo trucks is 100 percent but still rudimentary. No explosives have been found at this port of entry (POE). Pedestrian traffic consists 90 percent of Iranian pilgrims headed to Shi'a shrines in Najaf and Karbala: 2000 Iranians are permitted to enter daily as of August 1, 2008. Iraqi border patrols outside the ports of entry are currently inadequate due to fuel shortages. End Summary

#### Iran Exports to Iraq: Trade One Way

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¶2. (C/REL MCFI) Iran is clearly the beneficiary of trade as Iraq is only importing Iranian goods at this border crossing, with no exports to Iran. During an official Embassy visit to the border on August 21 hosted by Colonel Webb, Task Force Tusken Commander, we observed three types of traffic processed at the Port of Entry (POE) between Iran and Iraq at Zurbatiyah, near Badrah: fuel, non-fuel cargo, and pedestrians. (Note: This is the only Iran-Iraq POE which processes all three types of traffic.) Currently about 100 fuel trucks and 200 non-fuel cargo trucks load cargo daily. Iranian cargo trucks, since the Iran-Iraq war, have not been allowed to cross the border. Empty Iraqi trucks back up to the border and load Iranian goods. Recent shipments included produce (vegetables and fruits), bricks, glass and machinery. The offloading and turnaround process can take half a day. Iraqi fuel trucks can also travel inside Iran to refineries to load fuel. Approximately \$50,000 per day in cash is collected in border-crossing fees. It is not clear how much of this is making its way to the Ministry of Finance. A new ramp is under construction to facilitate faster cargo transfer.

#### Inspection of All Cargo Vehicles Mandatory

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¶3. (C/REL MCFI) The U.S. military inspects cargo trucks by three methods, a back scatter x-ray, trained explosive-detection dogs, and tunneling8 down through the cargo. Currently only one of three back scatter x-ray trucks is functional so cargo clearance will accelerate when this is remedied. No explosives, detonators or material for explosively-formed penetrators (EFPs) have been found at this POE. To virtually eliminate any possibility of lethal accelerant smuggling and to improve the efficiency of cargo transfer, the CF are building a multi-million dollar cargo trans-load area (CTLA) for the cross-load of goods with fifty truck bays on each side. The CTLA includes a dock, five meters from the border, where Iranian and Iraqi trucks will back up to the dock on their own side of the border and transfer commodities under the watchful eyes of officials. Completion of the project is scheduled for December 2008.

¶4. (S/REL NCFI) Iraqi officials process pedestrians via the &PISCES8 (Personnel Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System) database. (The original development of the PISCES system was financed by the DOS Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP).) The U.S. military also checks all military-age Iranian males between 16-45 crossing the border using a biometric system called BATS (Biometric Automated Toolset). It collects facial characteristics, fingerprints and iris photos, then checks the information against U.S. defense, criminal and intelligence databases. Information is routinely shared between the two systems. In particular, derogatory information collected on BATS is given to the GOI for use in the PISCES system. The process has led to several notable detainments and serves as a strong deterrent to criminal elements attempting to cross the border. It typically takes a pedestrian about four hours to cross. Ninety per cent of the pedestrian traffic from Iran consists of pilgrims visiting the Shi,a shrines in Najaf and Karbala; several we saw were infirm or elderly. Before the U.S military provided water and shelter at the POE, several died of heat stroke while waiting to cross. As of August 1, 2008, 2000 Iranians are allowed to enter daily.

Iraqi Border Patrols Inadequate  
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¶5. (C/REL MCFI) Outside the POEs, U.S. military briefers informed us that Iraqi border patrols have insufficient fuel for their vehicles to adequately patrol the border. People

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and cargo are likely coming in across the vast border by circumventing the POEs. Lack of electricity is also a problem, as Iraqi border checkpoint buildings outside POEs must run generators, further reducing fuel availability for patrols. U.S military briefers noted the situation may improve with increased fuel availability and cooler weather.

¶6. (C/REL MCFI) COMMENT: Current cargo inspections procedures are rudimentary and could be bypassed, for instance with the right bribe, but there is nothing to suggest at this time that there are significant munitions transiting this POE.

CROCKER